

A DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM FOR THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES  
IN THE ELIATHA, KANSAS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

JACK CARROLL GATT <sup>6514</sup>

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Approved by:

*Harlan J. Trennepohl*  
Major Professor

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a highly valued aid to learning and children vary widely in their readiness to use this aid. Of all the skills acquired in school, reading is the most essential for developing and socializing the child. It aids him in protecting himself, in acquiring information, in securing enjoyment, and thereby in becoming a more contented and useful member of society.

The modern elementary school looks upon its responsibility to teach children to read as a primary obligation. The person who cannot read well is seriously handicapped in conducting the affairs of responsible citizenship as an adult, and the child who is retarded in reading is likely to find himself in difficulty in most of his school work. In spite of the many changes which have occurred in teaching procedures in recent years and the continuing use of materials and activities which minimize the need for reading, modern school programs still depend heavily upon reading as a means of learning. As Fay states:

The evidence is clear, both from research and from the experience of countless teachers, that after the primary grades it becomes increasingly more difficult to be "poor" in reading and "good" in the content subjects.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore justifiable to stress the teaching of reading, that the task may be performed as effectively as possible.

Developmental reading programs are being established not only to

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1Leo Fay, "Responsibility for and Methods of Promoting Growth in Reading in Content Areas," Scholastic Magazine, 1:89, December, 1959.

minimize the number of low achievers but also to enrich the curriculum for normal and high achieving students. The wide range of capacities, abilities, needs, and interests in any classroom necessitates a differentiated approach to instruction at all school levels and in all areas of learning. "More innovations have been effected in reading instruction in the past thirty years of the present century than during the entire three hundred years of American history antedating that period."<sup>1</sup>

To a much greater extent than in the primary grades, the instruction and practice designed specifically for the intermediate level to develop increased skills need to be provided on a flexible basis. Each child in grades four through six does not read the same book and follow the same lessons at the same rate as other children in these grades.

There are many reasons why reading programs should not be standardized. The main reasons are (1) that children are not standardized, (2) that we lack the knowledge to prepare a "perfect" reading system, and (3) that the best system we have now in our elementary schools is probably very poor compared to those systems of the future.<sup>2</sup>

Today's educators are universal in accepting the fact that children are individuals having tremendous differences physically and mentally. Due to these differences each child needs to be treated as a separate individual rather than being treated as one part of a homogeneous group. For many teachers this appears to be an impossible task,

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<sup>1</sup>Wila Benton Smith, "American Reading Instruction," National Parent Teacher, 24:1, June, 1959.

<sup>2</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improving Reading Instruction (New York: World Book Company, 1957), p. 21.

for with a class of thirty or more students, giving each child individual attention for any appreciable length of time would indeed be impossible. Therefore a program is desired which would give a maximum of the benefits of individual attention to the students but which would require only a minimum per cent of increased individual attention on the part of the teacher.

#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report was to present the principles of a developmental reading program and determine the worthiness of this program of grouping pupils in the intermediate grades of the Hiawatha Elementary School with others near their own reading level, instead of grouping them with their own grade-age group.

The teachers in the Hiawatha Elementary School are of the opinion that the reading program has been very much improved since instruction has been given to more nearly equal groups of the students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, and a special teacher has been hired to teach the children in the school who have reading and speech disabilities.

#### PROCEDURES

The methods used in developing this report were:

1. Library research to learn what methods and materials were best suited for the intermediate grades. The references for this report were obtained in the Kansas State University Library.



2. A description of the developmental reading program which is being used at the Hiawatha Elementary School.
3. A subjective evaluation of the developmental reading program after three years implementation in the classroom.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

Reading. Gray has summarized recent definitions of reading. One definition is the "process of recognizing printed or written symbols." He considers this too narrow, however, and states that a slightly broader definition involves the recognition of the important elements of meaning in their essential relations, and includes accuracy and thoroughness in comprehension. Such a definition places the major emphasis on grasping the meaning. A still broader definition "assumes that the reader not only recognizes the essential facts or ideas presented, but also reflects on their significance, his understanding of the ideas apprehended."<sup>1</sup> Gray's definitions tend to broaden the concept of reading but also involve stages in the reading process. The child must recognize words and symbols before he can "get the thought" of these symbols. Furthermore there can be no critical evaluation of reading material until one "gets the thought" from the printed symbols.

Developmental reading. Harris has defined developmental reading as "those activities in which the main purpose of the teacher is to bring

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<sup>1</sup>William S. Gray, "The Nature and Types of Reading," The Thirty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1:25, March, 1936.

about an improvement in reading skills and activities in which learning to read is the main goal."<sup>1</sup> In this report developmental reading includes instruction in how to read for information and enjoyment with functional reading and recreational reading.

**Skimming.** A very rapid reading which the reader uses for a specific purpose such as getting an overall view of the article or in looking for a specific item such as a name or date is skimming. This often involves reading only the first sentence of each paragraph or may even be restricted to the reading of headings and sub-heads in the article. This is in agreement with Harris, who identified two types of skimming: (1) "Skimming to find answers to specific questions." and (2) "skimming to get a total impression."<sup>2</sup>

**Intermediate grades.** Grades four, five, and six in an elementary school are the intermediate grades.

#### THE NEED FOR A DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM

Teaching children to read has always been one of the most important responsibilities of the elementary school. Every child needs to develop his reading ability fully in order to succeed in school and to discharge his responsibilities later as a citizen of a democratic society.

Reading is the foundation of much of the enjoyment the individual gets out of life and is closely related to vocational efficiency.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1961), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 12.



Reading is intimately related to the success of the democratic way of life. The citizen needs to understand the meaning of democracy and to keep well enough informed to act wisely in its behalf. He needs the ability to detect pernicious propaganda, to weigh the opinions of others, to talk intelligently, and to work effectively with others. American citizens are called upon to make decisions that influence the lives of most of the people in the world. To do this intelligently requires a high level of reading ability.<sup>1</sup>

Since the child needs considerable ability in reading in order to succeed in school it is understandable that much attention should be devoted to the improvement of reading instruction. Learning to read is a complicated process, and the teaching of reading requires a thorough understanding of modern methods of teaching, familiarity with a wide range of reading materials, and the ability to understand children. If any developmental reading program is going to be successful, it must develop cooperatively among the teachers on the staff. Most teachers who are involved in the teaching of reading are sincerely trying to teach reading as well as they can under their present reading programs, teacher training, time allotments, and interpretations of the reading goals for their levels of teaching.

The educational program in the Hiawatha Elementary School had not been equally successful with all types of pupils in the reading program. It had done much more, on the whole, for poor readers than for good readers. It had provided better for the average pupils than for boys and girls of high reading ability. Although the program in the past had equipped most pupils with the tools for learning to read, it had allowed

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<sup>1</sup>William B. Ragan, Modern Elementary Curriculum (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960), p. 196.

large numbers of boys and girls to leave the school without having learned to read up to their own potential level, and had failed to challenge their best achievement.

Probably the best time to stimulate the teachers into initiating a new or revised program is just after a reading test has been administered to all the pupils of the school. After the results have been obtained a faculty meeting should be held for the purpose of discussing the test scores, the present reading program, and what may be done to improve the students' reading abilities.

Many schools have found that it is best to include the community in their planning from the beginning, instead of waiting for criticism or questioning. In any event it is advisable to stress to the public that a developmental reading program is not a completely new program consisting of radically new ideas. Instead it is a revision of the existing program with the main differences being: (1) continued stress in the active teaching of reading skills and techniques throughout the entire school system, and (2) allowing for individual differences through the process of grouping and other techniques for the purpose of allowing each individual child to work at his current level of reading and to progress at his own advancement rate.

#### PRINCIPLES OF A DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM

A developmental reading program should be based on certain principles. According to Smith and Dechant, educators are in general



agreement that the following basic principles are necessary to make the developmental reading program workable and effective:

1. The developmental program must be an all-school program directed toward carefully identified goals. It must receive the support and co-operation of the entire school staff.
2. The developmental program must be concerned with the social and personal development of each student as well as his growth in the skills, understandings, and attitudes necessary for successful reading.
3. The developmental program co-ordinates reading with the pupil's other communicative experiences.
4. The developmental program must be a continuous program extending through the elementary and secondary grades and college. It must provide instruction and guidance in basic reading skills, in content-area reading, in study skills, and in recreational reading.
5. The developmental program must be a flexible program that is adjusted at each level of advancement to the wide variations in student characteristics, abilities and reading needs.
6. The developmental program must have a stimulating classroom setting in which attitudes, interests, and abilities are developed effectively.
7. The developmental program must provide plentiful reading materials that cover a wide range of difficulty and interest.
8. The developmental program must include continuous measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program as a whole and of its more specific aspects.
9. The developmental program must provide for continuous identification and immediate remediation of deficiencies and difficulties encountered by any student.
10. The developmental program must include differentiated instruction to meet the needs of each child, but it cannot ignore the commonality of needs, interests, and abilities among children.
11. The developmental program must look upon reading as a process rather than as a subject. Reading is taught on all levels in all subject areas by all teachers.



12. The developmental program must emphasize reading for understanding and aim to develop flexibility in comprehension and rate in accordance with the student's abilities and purposes and the difficulty levels of the materials.

13. The developmental program must allow each student to progress at his own success rate to his own maximum capacity.

14. The developmental program must seek to develop reading maturity. A mature reader reads all kinds of materials. He perceives words quickly and accurately and reacts with correct meaning. He reads both for information and recreation.<sup>1</sup>

In this report these basic principles were used to formulate headings for the major points of the suggested developmental reading program. This plan was followed to reduce the possibility of omitting or violating any of the basic principles.

### Reading Goals

During the 1960-61 school year the teachers of the Hiawatha Elementary School began studying a new developmental reading program. The goal was to improve our reading program. The objectives set by the teachers were extending and enriching the experience of the child; broadening and improving interests and tastes in reading; developing resourcefulness in finding information; promoting self-direction; and achieving satisfactory progress in such basic reading skills as word recognition, vocabulary development, and comprehension and speed. If these objectives were to be realized, attention must be given to reading in every phase of

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<sup>1</sup>Henry P. Smith and Emerald V. Dechant, Psychology In Teaching Reading (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1961), pp. 379-380.

the school program rather than merely at specified periods.

Effective teaching of reading in the intermediate grades, as in the primary grades, is directed at broad and significant goals. It enables the pupil to make use of reading as a means of extending and enlightening his experiences, of fulfilling his desirable purposes, of satisfying his wants wholesomely, and of developing his worthy interests. It helps him build the personal satisfaction resulting from his achievement of sufficient reading ability. It also encourages him to acquire the definite understandings, skills, and attitudes that constitute the power to read and that he needs in order to succeed in all of the important reading activities in which he may engage in and out of school.<sup>1</sup>

Each year it is recommended that the staff continue a study of the reading abilities and habits of the students. Some problems with which teachers are concerned are building up adequate school and classroom libraries, selecting and using basic readers, developing a positive approach to the problem of comic books, making intelligent use of work-books, making commercial materials effective, evaluating pupil progress in reading, and assigning the role of oral reading.

The characteristics of a mature reader indicate the objectives toward which the whole developmental program is oriented but these characteristics are not likely to be developed in the reading students unless each teacher is familiar with the logical sequence in the developmental pattern of the reading skills and abilities and also knows which ones are normally taught at that level of teaching. A prime fundamental of the developmental reading program is that allowances must be made from any guides of specific instruction for variations in the students' individual needs.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul McKee, The Teaching of Reading (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1948), p. 127.



## Social and Personal Development

The fundamental purposes which the schools in this country must serve are embodied in the constitution of the United States of America. In carrying out the ideals of democracy we must hold fast to our belief that opportunity must be given to all our citizens to develop free, cooperative lives; to judge clearly and fairly and to act accordingly; to enjoy the highest values that life offers and to share them with others, regardless of race, color or creed.

Our democracy can only be as strong as our people are strong, and every educable citizen should be encouraged to develop to the fullest extent of his ability.

A democratic society has an obligation to provide opportunities for individuals to develop and use their talents, and the interests of society require that such opportunities be made attractive, but no one in a democracy can be compelled to use the opportunities available to him. The role of education in this connection is to equip the individual to use the opportunities that will best utilize his abilities and to guide him in making decisions that will serve both his own interests and those of society.<sup>1</sup>

America's opportunities ideally are open to everyone. Those who have competence for the position they seek may well succeed if they can demonstrate that competence in a satisfactory manner. We must endeavor to see that all members of society have developed that level of ability of which they are capable.

To say that every citizen in a democracy has the right to

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<sup>1</sup>"Education of the Gifted," National Education Association Journal, 48:3, December, 1959.



demonstrate his competence to make use of social opportunities is to affirm, in a limited sense, the principle of equal opportunity for all. But to insist that equal opportunities must always take the form of identical experiences is unrealistic. Efforts to impose identity of experience on individuals of differing interests and abilities are not only foredoomed to futility; they are also unfair especially to those individuals who deviate markedly from the average; and because they discriminate against individuals in such minority groups as the handicapped and the gifted, they are undemocratic. Moreover, to the extent that such efforts succeed, they prevent the maximum advancement of the general welfare.

The democratic ideal can be most fully attained when every individual has opportunity for educational experiences commensurate with his abilities and for vocational responsibilities commensurate with his qualifications.<sup>1</sup>

A democratic society is committed to the program of educating all the children of all the people regardless of their intellectual level. Every child should be educated to develop his fullest capabilities so that he can live a happy useful life. This does not mean that the educational system can educate all by the same methods or to the same levels of achievement. Through appropriate education, however, the children at all intellectual levels can be aided.<sup>2</sup>

The school of today is not limited to giving preparation for life. It is actually the life for children of school age.

The world discovers and capitalizes on individual differences. Great choruses thrill millions, but they are possible because of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel A. Kirk, Teaching Reading to Slow-Learning Children (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1940), p. 13.

variations among voices; writers entertain and instruct others, yet they, too, are able to do this because they deviate in interests and abilities; remarkable engineering projects are achieved annually, resulting from co-operative efforts of those who vary widely; countless endeavors of civilized man make life challenging because men differ one from another.

These variations of interests and abilities are developed in life outside the school. In fact, this has been so much an "outside-the-school" affair that music organizations, art clubs, and other attempts to provide for individual expression through activities of high social value have been called extracurricular.

Teacher discussions of averages, medians, and other measures of central tendency are short of reality unless measures of dispersion, deviations, or variability are added to the picture. The history of civilization shows that neither men nor children can be standardized and regimented; scientific studies in education and psychology which cite the extent of behavior problems and school failures give ample evidence of the need for a translation into classroom and schoolroom practice of the present knowledge of child development so that schools can be "learner centered" rather than "grade and calendar dictated."<sup>1</sup>

Research has shown that a pupil's progress in reading is influenced by factors such as his physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth. A developmental reading program takes these factors into consideration, and through systematic instruction it helps each pupil master the skills he needs for effective reading at each level of development. The purpose of the developmental reading program in the intermediate grades is to continue the growth that has been made in reading through

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<sup>1</sup>Bennett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction (New York: American Book Company, 1950), p. 4.



the primary grades.

It is to be stressed that there are no hard and fast requirements as to when certain stages of reading ability are to be reached or completed. In fact, thinking in terms of stages of development for any individual or group of children is valuable because it eliminates the accent upon grade placement in terms of reading achievement. Since the range of reading achievement in any one intermediate grade often becomes so wide as to include five grade levels, it is possible for a sixth grade teacher to work with children progressing satisfactorily in the second, third, fourth, and fifth stages of reading development. Slow-learners working at the third level of reading development as they attend sixth grade must not be considered failures, but children progressing at a rate in keeping with the factor of mental capacity.<sup>1</sup>

Reading is a form of social interaction. The reader acquires information useful to him in life, or he is stimulated to thought and action by the words of the writer. The American culture is a reading culture as witnessed by the sale of newspapers, magazines, and books; the constant output of advertisements of every kind; and the accepted necessity for reading ability in vocational pursuits. Since the national culture recognizes reading as a prerequisite to satisfactory social adjustment, the school reflects the social setting by according reading a place of major importance in the curriculum at every level.

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<sup>1</sup>Kirk, op. cit., p. 15.



### Communicative Experiences

The growth of the child in reading is continued in grades four through six, and teachers should coordinate reading with the pupil's other communicative experiences. Although reading development in both the primary and intermediate grades depends on skillful instruction aimed directly at individual differences in reading skills, it also depends on the richness and breadth of the entire curriculum.

When a single textbook must be used for all groups, regardless of their differences in reading ability, adjustment to the vocabulary problems may be made by giving an oral presentation to very poor reading groups. Since it is assumed that the ideas of the lesson are important enough for the child to learn, and that reading should not be an "iron curtain" which prevents the child from learning, it is desirable to present lessons orally when higher learning will result.

The reading material is full of word meanings outside the child's oral vocabulary. Word-analysis abilities take a much more significant place, since the vocabulary is far less controlled than in primary grades. Much of the silent reading is expository and informative rather than simple narrative. Reading rate must be adapted to a variety of tasks and more accurate and complete recall is required. Elaborative and critical thinking in relation to reading are expected of the child. Greater independence in outside reading and study becomes necessary, and opportunities for varied uses of reading are richer.<sup>1</sup>

Since children differ greatly in vocabulary abilities, it is necessary that they be grouped for reading instruction with vocabulary

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<sup>1</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improving Reading Instruction (New York: World Book Company, 1957), p. 31.

needs in mind. Superior readers need not be burdened with unnecessary word-meaning practice. They may need help on a few words, but the context may provide adequate meaning or they may look up the words in the dictionary. Poor readers may have so many word difficulties in the textbooks of the grade that it would be impossible for the children to learn in a day more than half of the difficult words.

The vocabulary burden may be relieved by use of synonyms or explanations when unfamiliar words arise. This oral presentation may be made by the teacher or by a superior reader selected by the group. If a pupil does the reading, it may be helpful to underline the words or phrases to be explained. If the listening group has been taught to ask for explanations when the words are difficult or the meaning of the passage obscure, the need for selecting words for definition is avoided.

An excellent method of increasing the children's vocabulary and enriching their experiences is derived from projects and excursions. Stories about these experiences may be written and then read by the children.

One teacher working with a group of intermediate children brought her camera to school, took a picture of each child, and developed the pictures in class. Each child wrote about his own picture and described the developing process. In that way the children enlarged their vocabulary in connection with a new and interesting project.<sup>1</sup>

The more advanced children can of course use the dictionary to look up words.

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<sup>1</sup>Kirk, op. cit., pp. 137-38.



Althea Beery sums up a bulk of research on the relationship of listening ability to reading ability with these findings. In vocabulary, comprehension of the spoken word was positively related to the comprehension of the written word, and weakness in auditory discrimination of speech sounds was one of the most important and most frequently occurring causal factors in poor reading. Hearing and reading comprehension were highly related. Listening was related more highly in getting the main ideas than in remembering details. There was evidence that listening was more effective than reading in producing a change of attitude; however, this was not conclusive and the use of both together was superior to the use of either one alone.<sup>1</sup> It would seem obvious that reading and listening were related and that improvement in one results in improvement in the other. Discussion after reading promotes growth in vocabulary, understanding, and interest.

The rate of learning new meanings of words may be tested in the various reading groups by skimming a chapter to discover ten words unfamiliar to the group. The meanings of the words are taught through definitions, illustrations, or synonyms. Each word should be on the blackboard or on a card so that it can be referred to several times while it is being discussed. The amount of time devoted to teaching meanings should be about the same as would be spent on the word in a regular lesson. After an hour has passed, the children may be tested on the

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<sup>1</sup>Althea Beery, "Interrelationships Between Listening and Other Language Arts," Elementary English, 31:3, March, 1954.



word meanings by matching the words with a list of definitions. This test will provide an estimate of the number of word meanings that may be successfully taught in a single lesson.

Success in school is dependent to a great degree upon the ability of the pupil to use reading as an aid in learning situations. Growth in essential reading power depends upon the acquisition of constellations of reading skills, habits, abilities; upon the development of favorable attitudes and appreciations; upon the increasing realization of certain understandings, knowledges, and insights related to learning to read. Reading is a complex process to teach and to learn, as stress must be placed upon the development of the meaning aspect of reading; interpretation, critical mindedness, assimilation, and use of material read.

The reading program of the elementary school is an integral part of the language-arts program to such an extent that the teaching of reading is inseparable from the teaching of oral language, written language, attentive listening, and critical thinking. The basis for growth in any area of language is the extension of experience. Research points out that it is impossible to make true progress in language development by forcing the child before he is ready physically, socially, emotionally, and mentally. It is futile to try to establish facility in any one phase of language if the pupil has not experienced success in the preceding stage of development.

The place of reading in the sequence of development carries the implication for teachers at every level that children must be given wide experiences in building concepts, in participating as an interested

listener, in contributing through oral language, if they are to make satisfactory progress in learning to read. Reading, in turn, helps children to progress in other forms of communication. Reading is one form of communication, an essential part of the language-arts curriculum; the child must be helped to realize the importance of reading in the total pattern of social interaction.

A full recognition of the sequential development of language makes it clear that language and facts are closely related. Basic notions of language-facts relationships lead to a realization of reading as a facet of language. Since reading ability is one facet of language development, all teachers are directly concerned with the development of reading ability.

The purposes of oral reading include developing the ability to convey an author's meaning to others in an interesting manner, serving as a means of self-expression for the child, and providing a means of entertaining and informing the members of a group. The following suggestions should be useful in improving the teaching of oral reading:

- (1) Provide a real audience situation for oral reading.
- (2) Teach the pupil to read a selection as if he were speaking it.
- (3) Teach pupils the importance of a pleasant voice, correct pronunciation, and rhythm in reading orally.
- (4) Select materials for oral reading carefully; both prose and poetry should be included.
- (5) Have the pupil practice reading the selection before presenting it to an audience.
- (6) Provide opportunities for pupils to dramatize stories, to recite poetry in unison, to announce numbers on a program, and to prepare radio programs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William B. Nagan, Modern Elementary Curriculum (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960), p. 206.



### A Continuous Reading Program

The developmental reading program in the modern school is made to fit the needs of the individual child, although the instruction may be carried on in small groups. The goal of the developmental program is to establish reading as an intrinsic feature of the child's pattern of living.

Without growth in appreciation and in ability to interpret literature on increasingly higher levels of maturity, children become adults who still read at the comic-book stage. It is important to introduce children to the great wealth of literature available at their level of maturity.

A child's first experiences with literature should be pleasurable. He may look at a picture book, perhaps alone or with someone else, or he may enjoy a book read or told. In the kindergarten and the first grade, children like repetition, and delight in obstreperous humor. Gradually the teacher should lead them into more subtle humor. Consciousness of the varied offerings of literature is a part of appreciation and leads to a growing appetite for more.

Enjoyment of poetry should play a large part in the child's association with literature. Saying favorite poems together is normally a part of every day's experience. As the snow falls, as a bird alights on the window sill, as the circus arrives, children and teacher feel like imagining, and a story or poem that fits the occasion can be enjoyed.

By the time children reach the intermediate grades they should have heard two to three hundred rhymes and poems which will serve as a reservoir to be used in many different ways—for sharing, for choral speaking, for



comparisons. In these grades, the children will be interested in longer poems, in poems that tell a story with real-life characters, and in situations where characters must sometimes make a choice between two courses of action. In this period children are growing into an appreciation of poems that rely for their appeal on beauty of thought as well as beauty of language or of music.

In their reading of fiction, children continue to enjoy humor in these grades. Boys of this age branch out into adventure. They need to discover the values of good adventure books and to develop standards against which to measure cheap juvenile series or comics. Girls specialize in fairy tales. The girls like stories of children like themselves.

Children in these grades should show evidences of the extent to which literature makes a difference in what they are and what they do. In these years the fantastic may take on an air of reality, but humor is most appreciated in terms of a situation in which the character does not fit, or in which there is a play on words.

It is obvious that in order to develop in elementary school children a growing appreciation of literature, teachers themselves must be steeped in story and verse for children. They must sense the moments in the lives of boys and girls when the right story or poem can bring pleasure, or uplift, or insight. Only by her own appreciation of what makes literature great or pleasurable or significant in everyday life can the teacher hope to establish a similar appreciation in children.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Language Arts," A Curriculum Guide For The Elementary Schools of Kansas, Revised, 1958, pp. 106-8.

In organizing a new reading program vital information, strong group organization, and a plan of action must be presented. Several facts that must be considered in a developmental reading program are:

- (1) We are concerned with the majority of the students, so the program should be continuous through Junior High School.
- (2) Probably the most good from the program will come to the good and average readers because old programs have been geared to the slow readers.
- (3) The program must be modified each year to meet any changing needs in our situation.
- (4) There is no perfect correlation between I.Q. and reading ability.
- (5) Developmental reading is not the same as remedial reading and reading skills vary for each subject.

#### A Flexible Reading Program

That wide differences occur among individuals is a fact acknowledged in life outside the school. In order to measure up to reality, the school must recognize individual differences as well as the wide variations in rates of learning that exist among children. When these facts are consistently considered in classrooms, differentiation of instruction based upon individual needs will follow. With the introduction of differentiated instruction, reading difficulties can be reduced to a minimum, because prevention is emphasized instead of correction.

Teaching is the practical recognition of differences. Until differences among the pupils of a given class are recognized, instruction cannot be on a sound, effective, systematic basis. A significant part of



the dilemma in modern education has been brought about by failure to admit differences by treating all children alike.

A "class or grade" is an abstraction; it exists only in the teacher's mind or nervous system. Actually, a class is comprised of a group of individuals. These individuals vary widely in capacities, achievements and interests. In a sound educational program, the practices must match the facts. Regimented instruction (the use of the same materials for all the pupils of a "class" or "grade,") must be justified on the basis of questionable assumptions, whereas the facts make differentiated instruction imperative. No one has ever seen a "fourth grade class," or a "sixth grade class." What a teacher should "see" is a group of individuals, unique unto themselves. Not until differences are "seen" is the teacher ready to teach, because learning about the child must precede teaching him.<sup>1</sup>

There are differences among individuals and children vary in their rates of learning. When classroom activities are based on this assumption, the teacher does not attempt to keep every member on the same page in the "reader" or even in the same book, and not all pupils are expected to progress from primers to readers in goose-step fashion, for each small group is allowed to proceed at maximum rate. Joy and satisfaction cannot result in situations where fast learners are held to the attainments of the immature and the slow are driven toward the attainments of the average.

While grouping is the most widely used practice to provide for differences in ability at the present time, Fay states that the most widely discussed trend is individualized reading. He describes this approach with the following characteristics:

. . . Elimination of the basal reader as the core of reading instruction, self-selection of materials by the pupils for their own instruction, and individual conferences between the pupil and the teacher.

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<sup>1</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction (New York: American Book Company, 1950), p. 3.



This approach capitalizes on pupil interest and, theoretically at least, makes complete individualization possible. Both teachers and children tend to react quite enthusiastically to this approach, and this alone is a strong recommendation. The approach has its weaknesses, however. The very real values of group learning may be lost in a completely individualized program. It also tends to be very demanding of the teacher's time. As a result, the children and their needs can become lost as the teacher frantically goes about her record keeping. Furthermore, with lack of organization some skills may be partially or even totally ignored.<sup>1</sup>

Due to its inherent weaknesses, individualized reading is not likely to become the one and only method of teaching reading, but it is likely to be adopted, in varying degrees, in many of the reading programs of the near future. With the proper application, this phase of reading can aid the teacher not only in caring for individual needs but also in stimulating the children's interests in reading and school as well.

The flexibility and variety of the reading activities in any one classroom will, of course, need to be adjusted to the abilities of that particular group of children. Some fourth-graders will be more like primary children in the degree to which they can engage in wide independent reading, and in their need to have the activities that introduce new words and provide practice in new skills developed in a definite sequence. Smaller groups in the fifth and sixth grades may find typical intermediate-grade materials difficult and may need to work with easier books and less elaborate activities. On the other hand, one of the dangers is the temptation for the fast reader to escape personal responsibility by clinging to the standards of the group.

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<sup>1</sup>Leo Fay, "Trends in the Teaching of Elementary Reading," Phi Delta Kappan, 41:8 (May, 1960), pp. 346-47.

Increased independence needs to be capitalized upon as it is attained; more challenging tasks provided as children are ready for them; and special practice planned in the light of the type of problem the children have encountered. It becomes the responsibility of each classroom teacher to make continuous appraisals of the present reading status of the children in order to identify points where help is needed. It will also be the responsibility of each classroom teacher to plan so the reading experiences which are provided for the children as part of their on-going classroom activities raise new problems and call for increased skill.<sup>1</sup>

After the teacher has built these intermediate-grade materials, they should be filed for use in the future.

After a series of meetings during the 1960-61 school year, the faculty of the Hiawatha Elementary School arrived at some conclusions that they felt would help improve the reading program in the elementary school. These proposals were the outcome of three meetings of the Curriculum Committee on Reading, two discussions by committee members with the reading consultant from Ginn and Company and from Houghton-Mifflin Company and three meetings of the elementary school faculty.

After considerable thought, research, and deliberation, the faculty of the Hiawatha Elementary School submitted the following plan concerning the organization of the reading program and implemented the plan in September, 1961:

(1) Based on the results of teachers' evaluation and at least two reliable reading tests, each student was placed in a reading class composed of students of near the same reading ability rather than the past system of placing them in a grade that was based on the age of the child.

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret C. McKim, Guiding Growth in Reading, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 323.



- (2) This program began in the fourth grade and included the fifth and sixth grades.
- (3) All students were divided into seven reading levels. The lowest level contained approximately fifteen students and each of the other levels contained approximately one-sixth of the total number remaining of students involved in grades four, five, and six. This grouping was done as follows: The composite scores were ranked with the highest score at the top and so on down. The slowest group included approximately five students from each grade and the remaining groups contained approximately one-sixth of the remaining students.
- (4) As a result of the test scores, no student was placed more than one year above or below his grade placement equivalent.
- (5) Testing and distribution of the students was accomplished at the beginning of each semester of the school year.
- (6) One teacher was assigned to teach each one of the seven levels and all groups met at the same time of the day.

The advantages of such a program were that it provided a more nearly homogeneous group for the teacher to work with by greatly reducing the number of reading groups within a given level. Each child competed with students more nearly on his level of ability. This improved the chance of success for the slower child; while the competition for the gifted child became keener. The classes were smaller in size since one more teacher was utilized which allowed more time for individual attention. This also helped boost our reading program which had given some indication that recent large enrollments had caused the program to "sag"



somewhat. Proof of this is that enrollment in remedial reading classes had nearly doubled in the last three years before the new developmental reading program was instituted.

Disadvantages of such a program were the possible negative reaction and lack of understanding of the program by the parents. It was felt, however, that the contacts with the parents through the parent-teacher conferences would be of great assistance in helping to alleviate this particular problem.

Flexibility in grouping is essential. Children with similar ability work together frequently for units in the content fields. However, this grouping should not always be followed. Among other possibilities that can be suggested are:

Working with the class as a whole when a reading problem is common to the whole group; grouping children according to interest or friendship, and adjusting the difficulty of the materials to be read accordingly; grouping children according to interest and assigning good readers to be special helpers; keeping together one group of children who need special help while others are grouped according to interest; breaking larger groups of like ability into pairs or sub-groups in order to concentrate on parts of a group plan; selecting from children who would normally work in different groups a special practice group to work on a common difficulty; providing individualized work-type activities for a child with a particular problem. In these settings the particular need and the most efficient way of meeting it determine the group.

In order to organize a more effective developmental reading program the fourth, fifth, and six grade pupils in the Hiawatha Elementary School are grouped according to Table I. Each year this grouping includes

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 344.

approximately 210 intermediate grade pupils in the Hiawatha Elementary School ranging in age from nine to twelve years.

TABLE I

NUMBER OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE HIAWATHA  
DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM AND  
THEIR RESPECTIVE GROUPING

Group	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Group Total
I	5	5	5	15
II	35			35
III	20	15		35
IV	10	15	5	30
V		20	10	30
VI		15	20	35
VII			30	30
Grade Total	70	70	70	210

The number of these pupils may vary yearly according to their reading ability as determined by the three tests given.

Group I through VII is the grouping from lowest to highest level. Group I is allowed fewer students because this group contains the five weakest reading students from each of the three intermediate grades.

The three basic checks made were: (1) the three reading tests administered each year, (2) the scores of all other tests taken which are kept in the permanent records of the school vault, and (3) previous teachers' opinions of the students' past performances.

By administering three reading tests in May of each year over this past three year period these students were found to vary from low third grade level to high ninth grade level in reading ability. Each individual score was determined by an average of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, the Nelson Developmental Reading Test, and the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test.

I.Q. tests were administered to all students when they were in the third and fifth grades, and the scores ranged between 79 and 141 with the average being 110.

The teacher must continually study and evaluate the reading program in staff meetings and spend about the first six weeks of school studying all the information that can be gathered about each child in her reading group.

#### A Stimulating Classroom Setting

The quality of reading instruction depends primarily upon one person, the classroom teacher.

Any teacher who has something to do with making a child into a God-fearing, honest, consistent citizen who thinks for himself has



built for permanent values. It is this greater goal which has made teaching a vocation, rather than just a means of making a livelihood.<sup>1</sup>

The teacher should always be alert to recognize individual differences and individual difficulties, and should determine whether or not the child is developing in all phases of reading. If he is backward in one phase, exercises should be introduced to improve that weakness. Basal readers, supplementary materials, supervisory assistance, and professional books are intended to help the teacher serve pupils better; but all of these are futile unless they are used with imagination and good judgment. The remarkable challenge of teaching every child to read, instead of dropping half of the children from school by the end of the sixth grade as we did prior to 1920, has been met in a most commendable manner. Yet teachers are not content with their present achievement. No subject in the elementary school curriculum attracts more teachers in university courses and in professional meetings than the subject of reading.

Differentiation of instruction is making a strong bid to supersede the remedial reading of the 1930's and is likely to take precedence over the limited plans for grouping and for individualized instruction. A program of differentiated instruction involves more than small group and individual activities. It includes class planning and activities, group planning and activities, and individual planning and activities. Differentiated instruction is a way of evaluating and living with a group of individuals in a classroom that results in a maximum of development of

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin John Brown, Managing The Classroom (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1952), p. 115.

each individual in terms of his interests, needs, and capacities. Through this type of classroom administration, basic reading skills, abilities, attitudes, and information are given life significance.

It is also to be hoped that the physical plant will be sound, adequate, and properly decorated and lighted but the most important item in developing student morale is a genuine interest in the students and their learning activities on the part of the teacher. A stimulating classroom environment, together with full utilization of school and community resources, facilitates the acquisition of reading power.

#### A Wide Range Of Reading Materials

Since we know now that the student learns in accordance with his own purposes and experiences which he cannot in fact truly perceive in any other way, we must necessarily look to a modification of the role and usefulness of the subject matter in reading. We now know that reading will be perceived as the student can perceive it, no matter what we do, and that no two students will perceive a given fact the same way.

This does not mean that the subject matter in reading will not be used, or that it becomes unimportant.

We cannot teach without teaching something, or students learn without learning something. No piece of reading material, no fact of human knowledge, is bad in itself. Neither is any fact good in itself. It is good or bad only in relation to the person learning it, and to the possibility of his learning it. The question becomes one of asking who the reading material is for, whether or not he has the purpose and experience to acquire it, what its acquisition will do to and for the learner, and why it should be learned.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Earl C. Kelley, Education For What Is Real (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 99.



Experiments with school children have shown that learning takes place more rapidly and efficiently if the materials to be learned are meaningful and interesting to the child. In addition to the emphasis on repetition and developing a method of word-recognition, the degree of interest in the materials presented to a child should be considered.

If the child has attended school for several years and has been confronted with primary readers and has failed to learn to read well, he sometimes resents having these books again. His classmates have gone on beyond the reading found in primary books. Because of his feeling of inferiority in this respect he attempts to justify his disinterest by calling such books, "baby books."

With slow learners, especially those who have experienced failure, one of the most important factors in creating interest is success in reading. If the teacher presents material that the child can read successfully, interest will be greatly accelerated. On the other hand, materials may have elements of surprise and liveliness but if they are beyond the child's ability, he will not become interested in them. Selection of material should be within the child's ability but should not be so simplified that he will learn nothing from reading, or that he will become bored.<sup>1</sup>

The superior readers may often need guidance in finding books to satisfy their personal needs. In a world of television and comic books, they sometimes require encouragement, incentive, and direction to form desirable and individually appropriate reading patterns. All children need help to find books to satisfy developmental needs as they arise.

Encouragement should be given the superior reader so he will sometimes turn to poetry. Through the reading of poetry, the superior

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel A. Kirk, Teaching Reading to Slow-Learning Children (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1940), p. 21.



reader may find great pleasure. However, reading poetry alone will not accomplish this but reading accompanied by discussion and related experience may prove quite beneficial.<sup>1</sup>

Basal readers become, in most schools, the course of study in reading skills in most grades but for the average pupil only. Although many children in the intermediate grades will require instruction on the primary-grade reading levels, the average and superior children will need instruction on more advanced skills.<sup>2</sup>

From different series of basal readers, stories may be selected which illustrate different possibilities of the uses of reading, word-analysis and word-meaning development lessons, special types of reading, and study practice. Important aspects of the reading program for the intermediate grades include the identification of strange words, reading for a variety of purposes, development of skill in the gaining of meaning and understanding, recreational reading, study reading, and oral reading. Certainly there is no need in the intermediate grades to purchase more than five or six copies of any basal reader, since individual-skill needs are served through small-group instruction. Superior pupils in intermediate grades will seldom be served well by basal readers. Their need is for a much broader literature and study program than any basal reader can provide.

Many stories with a variety of topics and varying degree of difficulty for the difference in reading skills should be provided in book form or pamphlets for the children in the classroom. Interesting books with the vocabularies of the intermediate grade level can be purchased for this

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Witty, Reading in Modern Education (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1949), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improving Reading Instruction (New York: World Book Company, 1957), p. 35.

purpose. This may encourage the fast reader to read even better and help the slow reader to improve his reading habits.

The children should be allowed to select any book they wish to read in school or to take home. They should not be forced to answer a variety of questions related to a book. Such procedure may halt their interest. However, it may be worthwhile to provide a period of class time in which the children can be encouraged to discuss an interesting book that they have read. In this way the teacher will have a guide to their comprehension. Usually, free reading creates interest in books and stories, develops concentration, and provides pleasurable experiences. Free reading stimulates comprehension since the child is reading to see what will happen next.

Reading-skills materials to fit special needs may be commercial, such as workbooks, dictionaries and dictionary-skills materials, developmental lessons on a particular needed ability, word-analysis lessons especially in connection with spelling, study guides and workbooks which accompany social studies and science books, and various other materials that fit instructional needs and assist in building essential skills. The classroom will need to have encyclopedias and supplementary science and social studies textbooks. It would be highly desirable to have different levels of history and science materials based upon similar organization. Independent reading, small-group and individual projects in content subjects, and the use of a reading program call for a school or town library, with some separate volumes immediately available in the classroom. The teacher should have collections of plays, poems for choral reading,



biographies, travel books, craft books, catalogues, monographs, magazines, newspapers, and special collections available for illustration and for teaching the uses of reading. Libraries of films and recordings will also enrich the instructional program.

Many projects and activities in class encourage comprehension and evaluation of the reading materials.

After the discussion of a project and of the manner in which it is to be executed the teacher may mimeograph or write out directions for the children. The children may then read the directions to find their individual parts in the activity. The directions may require modification or extension, depending upon the ability of the children. This introduces the process of evaluation and stimulates thinking about the reading material. Another method is to write the story of a project and give correlated seat work in the form of questions and answers in order to determine what reading progress the children have made.<sup>1</sup>

Other suggestions useful in improving the teaching of reading are:

- (1) Provide a wide range of reading materials from the standpoint of difficulty, content, and type.
- (2) Maintain an informal classroom atmosphere; allow children to select materials within their own areas of interest.
- (3) Provide opportunities for the child to share with the group a selection he has enjoyed reading.
- (4) Read a part of a story and encourage children to complete it.
- (5) Encourage children to browse through books and magazines.
- (6) Encourage children to recommend books to the class by means of a talk, poster, or some other device.<sup>2</sup>

Audio-visual materials such as pictures, maps, globes, films, filmstrips, radios and recordings, diagnostic materials for the evaluation of progress and procedures, paper, scissors, crayons and other art materials for correlating reading with other phases of the program should be available.

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<sup>1</sup>Kirk, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>William B. Egan, Modern Elementary Curriculum (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960), p. 207.



## Continuous Measurement Of The Reading Program

No reading program has ever been perfect and probably never will be; therefore there is constant need for evaluation and revision.

Such factors as overcrowding of classrooms, rigid promotion policies, inadequate reading materials, and pressure from parents to have children begin reading too early have retarded progress in developing a modern program of reading instruction. The reading program needs continuous study, evaluation, and revision in order to keep it in line with modern principles of learning and the broader objectives of the elementary school. There is urgent need for a better understanding on the part of principals, teachers, and parents of what constitutes an adequate program of reading instruction and for long-range planning for the purpose of giving direction and balance to the day-to-day activities of teachers.<sup>1</sup>

Some questions which the people of Hiawatha, Kansas, were interested in discussing were:

1. Would better teaching take place in the elementary school reading program if a third section could be added to each grade to help eliminate the present overcrowded conditions in the classrooms?
2. Should a teacher be hired full time to teach the children in the elementary school who have reading and speech disabilities?
3. How far should we go toward departmentalization in the intermediate grades of the elementary school?

Some problems to be solved or overcome to make our program more successful are:

1. Too heavy teacher load or a shortage of teachers.
2. Lack of teacher information, education, and materials.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

3. Parent opposition to their children being in a class below their "grade" level.
4. Difficulty of developing good reading habits in the students, as opposed to their poor reading habits at home.

The faculty meets to discuss the questions of difficulties and needs of the students.

1. How can pupils be made conscious of the importance of reading?
2. In what classes can reading improvement actually take place?
3. Should other classes be responsible for the teaching of reading?
4. What effect does reading have on the total curriculum?

Some objectives which will improve our reading program are:

1. To develop a more unified organization.
2. To continue work on the reorganization of the course of study in reading.
3. To develop cooperatively an analysis sheet to be used by teachers in the study of instructional practice.
4. To improve the teaching of the fundamental skills in the fourth and fifth grades commensurate with the pupil's ability to learn.
5. To improve the teaching of work-type reading in the sixth grade group.
6. To train teachers in the use of diagnostic tests in reading appropriate to the level involved.
7. To diagnose specific needs of different groups and to organize remedial instruction.
8. To secure more worthwhile use of supplementary reading textbooks.
9. To give the pupils an enrichment environment and educational experience.

10. To improve teachers in-service training.
11. To encourage teachers' contributions to the improvement of instruction in reading.

To keep the program in action a staff meeting was held to elect our "special" reading teacher chairman of the developmental reading program for our school and each teacher contributed ideas acquired during the first six weeks study period. To improve our program the following have been used for better motivation:

1. Obtain better and more interesting reading textbooks.
2. Strive to get across the purpose of reading.
3. Obtain library books to match the interests and needs of the pupils.

To improve the program the following techniques have been used.

1. Emphasize comprehension first and speed next in outside reading.
2. Give more assignments on outside reading and library material.
3. Have a series of local study groups with general or limited teachers' meetings.
4. Have a local workshop with facilities and personnel available at stated times.
5. Encourage extension courses and summer school work in reading for the teachers.
6. Have committee and study groups examine student interests, attitudes, problems, and needs in reading.
7. Do experimental work with individuals and the group for the development of new materials.
8. Have committees working on curriculum improvement.



9. Encourage visits to other schools by teachers and staff, and hold conferences with other teachers.
10. Have committees and study groups to examine new and supplementary texts and other materials.
11. Have cooperatively determined programs of directed observation and directed teaching.
12. Seek ideas from each member on the progress of the program.
13. Plan cooperatively to attack general or specific problems in reading.
14. Encourage and assist fellow teachers in carrying on individual study on general and specific problems in reading.
15. Suggest that an observer evaluate the group and keep the group concentrated on the problem at hand.
16. Seek aid from specialists in the field of reading.

#### Identification and Remediation of Difficulties

In addition to the over-all developmental program of reading instruction, there are two other instructional reading tasks which must be handled by the teacher. One is the organization of corrective instruction in any phase of reading which causes difficulty for an individual or a group. It is a normal situation when the classroom teacher must provide corrective instruction for a changing group of children who make up a small part of the enrollment. Some of the causes for failure and other factors that may cause a reading problem are:

1. Poor reading background of learners.
  - a. Lack of motivation.

- b. Poor reading habits.
- c. Low mentality of a slow learning child.
- 2. Poor organization of classroom techniques.
  - a. Lack of training and experience of the teachers in reading.
  - b. Insecurity in progressing from one level of reading to another.
  - c. Poor diagnoses of pupil difficulties.
  - d. Poor guidance in determining individual differences.
  - e. Poor reading materials provided.
  - f. Following old courses of study and curriculum guides.
  - g. Poor evaluation of the outcomes of the reading units.
  - h. Lack of a good testing program for individual abilities.
  - i. Lack of resource units and new courses of study.
  - j. Poor knowledge of administration's policy and procedure.
- 3. Absence from school because of illness and truancy.
- 4. Lack of parent interest in pupils' reading needs.

It is the writer's observation that many homes are lacking in reading materials such as books and magazines, and many of the homes in our community do not even subscribe to daily newspapers.

The other instructional task involves helping children who present severe reading disabilities as diagnosed by a reading specialist. The classroom teacher must cooperate with the specialist in putting the remedial program to work, but the responsibility for the diagnosis of extreme deviation from normal progress in reading does not reside with the classroom teacher. "Only about one per cent of the total school

population is classified as remedial cases."<sup>1</sup> Thus the teacher must handle corrective and remedial work in addition to the developmental instruction, if each child is to progress at a rate consonant with his ability and needs.

The emphasis in reading instruction is rapidly changing from remedial to developmental. Teachers are more concerned about prevention than correction of difficulties through excellent classroom teaching. The reading consultant who helps the teacher with slow learners is rapidly replacing the remedial teacher who works with children who have already failed. It is most encouraging to find many school systems in which reading disability is exceedingly rare. While the need for remedial instruction continues, the more successful methods of the remedial teacher are the same as those used in the more effective classrooms. The problems of children in an Educational Clinic are almost exactly the same as those found by the classroom analyses made by teachers. Remedial, clinical, and classroom instruction are very similar and no separate treatment of them is presented.<sup>2</sup>

#### Common Interests and Needs

The process of teaching reading at the first and succeeding levels of development entails consideration of the child's mental maturity, his emotional stability, his social adjustment, and his physical condition.

The close relationship between good mental health and ability to

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<sup>1</sup>"Language Arts," A Curriculum Guide For The Elementary Schools of Kansas, Revised, 1958, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improving Reading Instruction (New York: World Book Company, 1957), p. 1.



read independently should never be lost sight of. It is important to give each child at all times something to keep him happily occupied and give him pride in real accomplishment. He should have pride in self, should be praised for something he can do; and what he cannot do should not be emphasized. For some students clinical help may be necessary. For most, however, improvement can be brought about by giving instruction in reading techniques and by furnishing reading materials they can understand and appreciate. These materials should be supplemented by films, recordings, and exhibits.

Another common need of children is that of being cared for and loved by an adult. In most instances this need is adequately filled by the child's parents, but in some cases the child may feel he is wholly unwanted in the adult world. Here again, a genuinely interested and understanding teacher will help to fill the void. The type of teacher desired is not one who teaches the subject of reading, but rather one who teaches children and regards reading as a process which they must understand and be able to use.

Among the common needs of children we find the desire to belong to or be associated with a group and the desire to attain a degree of success within that group. It is important for the teachers to acquire better knowledge of the group process so that the interaction of students can be observed and steps can be taken to improve their group experiences. In all group activities, emphasis should be on what happens to the students.

The physical health and well-being of children is also of great concern to teachers. Fatigue is an important factor to be reckoned with.

It may be caused by long periods of sitting quietly, so a change of pace in reading activities is very essential.

Basic needs of the child, the need for security, for recognition, and for satisfactory achievement, can be met through classroom reading activities.

### Reading As A Process

By regarding reading as a process rather than as a subject, it is easily seen that children should be taught reading on all levels and in all subject areas by all teachers.

First, reading is a facet rather than an isolated fragment of language. If this assumption is valid, then systematic sequences in reading must be validated in terms of general language development.

Second, reading is primarily a problem of interpretation, in the larger sense. The semantic emphasis on reading as "the reconstruction of the facts behind the symbols" must take precedence over the so-called mechanics of reading. The instructional jobs in reading, such as location of information, comprehension, selection and evaluation, and organization, begin with the admission of the child to kindergarten or first grade and continue to be perennial problems through college and adult life.<sup>1</sup>

The basic skills and fundamentals of reading are far too often neglected at the intermediate level because of the assumption that they were taught to the pupils at the primary level and need not be taught again. The skills and techniques dealing with such things as word recognition or identification and comprehension of the printed matter are to be used in all academic subjects, not just in the formal reading class alone. Every grade has some poor readers with reading ability levels

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<sup>1</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction (New York: American Book Company, 1950), p. 5.



that range from five to seven grades. It is highly important that the basics of learning be repeated again and again, though from different approaches, until the pupils can apply and use them independently and with confidence. DeBoer and Dallmann expressed this clearly when they stated:

The teaching of reading should not be confined to a single period in the school day. The special problems of reading in arithmetic, history, geography, science, and other subjects should be dealt with at the same time these subjects are studied. The special vocabularies of the various fields of study require careful, patient instruction. Not only the new words, but familiar words that have new meanings for the pupil require particular attention.<sup>1</sup>

When reading is regarded as a process involving all academic subjects rather than the reading class alone, it is easy to see that the children must be taught to read for different purposes and at different rates of speed. The teachers in our school are of the opinion that our reading program has been very much improved since we began instructing to more nearly equal groups of the students in the intermediate grades.

#### Reading For Understanding

A new concept for the student in the intermediate grades is that of adjusting his reading rate and techniques to fit the purposes and difficulty of the material which is being read. Prior to this level of instruction the reading has been almost wholly restricted to learning how to read non-informative material and reading for pleasure in order to strengthen the ability to read.

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<sup>1</sup>John J. DeBoer and Martha Dallman, The Teaching of Reading (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 332.

In the intermediate grades the serious study of content subjects is begun. This requires the student, while reading, to think deeply enough to comprehend and remember facts, concepts, and information which he did not know previously.

The teacher should provide instruction in the use of time-tables, graphs, road maps, telephone books, city directories, and other reference materials used by the average adult. Some of these reading activities can be accomplished through projects and activities. Many children learn this information easily, but the slow learner may require specific classroom instruction. This is reading in preparation for life activities.

It is important to learn through recognition of differences. Through this type of classroom administration, basic reading skills, abilities, and attitudes—such as location of information, selection, evaluation, and organization—are given life significance. Differentiation looms large here as in all areas of school life, for a wide range of experiences and needs dictates the practical purposes to which reading accomplishments will be put. Language is a social tool to be developed in social situations.

#### Continual Reading Progress of The Individual

Education, to be effective, must be continuous, individual, highly personal, and active rather than passive. As a result, the range of individual differences within a group is increased rather than diminished. A sound educational program should extend these differences the longer the pupils remain in school. It appears, then, hardly conceivable that the



so-called "fundamentals" or "minimum essentials" can be defined and written into one prescription to meet the immediate and future needs of every child at a given chronological, mental, and social level. Since each classroom presents many problems relative to group living and learning, the teacher cannot avoid her obligation to provide situations where equal learning opportunities are possible and where each child may learn at his own rate and in terms of his own interests. It is generally agreed that the handling of the individual reading differences should be regarded as a major objective for the intermediate reading teachers.

Psychologists and educators agree that too much competition in the classroom may do more harm than good, although it does furnish an incentive for some children. It may be true that children will function better if they are successful in competition. Not everyone can be at the head of the class, however, and those who are at the foot suffer from the procedure.

If competition must be used as an incentive for further achievement among children, it is best that a child compete with himself. A child may read one book one week, mark it in his record book, then beat his record by reading two books the next week, and three the third week. Many children like to beat their own records, and there is no harm in such procedure. In many cases it may furnish an incentive for accuracy in reading.

Preventive reading instruction is primarily differentiated guidance in language development. From available evidence it appears that a program similar to the one outlined here must be designed to prevent a majority of our present reading ills in terms of premises quite different from

those basic to traditional forms of education. Basic to preventive reading instruction are certain assumptions, of which a few will be described briefly.

Readiness for reading involves not only a general language development and a background of direct and vicarious experience but also certain other specifics (such as general motive questions, needs, and interests) which orient the learner for the reading of a given unit of material. In this sense, readiness is not something that can be purchased in a prereading book. Readiness is a problem at all levels of instruction. In the light of this assumption, the recent trend in basal readers to postpone initial reading instruction for all pupils becomes one to be carefully controlled.

Language patterns are developed systematically and, to a degree, are unique unto each individual. If this assumption is valid, then the overemphasis on grade placement of curriculum items in the traditional schools of the past must be superseded by attention to systematic sequences on a differentiated basis. For example it is a shock for some traditionalists to learn that the authors of seventeen series of spellers for grades two to eight agreed on the grade placement of only one word (ten). It will continue to be difficult to overcome traditional notions that there is such a curriculum item as a second-grade spelling or reading word until learner development is given first consideration.

A wide range of language abilities exists at any one "grade level." For example, our studies have shown that fifth-grade children vary in reading ability from about the "preprimer level" to "twelfth-grade level;" that the reading rates for the same group of children ranged from approximately thirty words per minute to more than eight hundred.

Education increases individual differences. For example, the reading capacities of six-year-olds vary widely but the reading abilities fall within very narrow limits. With each successive year or "grade," the range of reading abilities is extended. Differentiated instruction increases these differences among pupils of a given age or "grade" level instead of producing homogeneity.<sup>1</sup>

Because there is much room for improvement in the reading ability of all students in a school system, pupils who are given the proper materials and good instruction will show rapid improvement.

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Betts, op. cit., p. 5.



### Developing Reading Maturity

The final objective of a developmental reading program is developing reading maturity in the reading student. The degree of success achieved in developing mature readers will be dependent on the degree of success which has been attained in developing the ability to read in the students. As Bond and Wagner say, "Anything that is done to improve the reading ability of children will tend to increase their interests and improve their tastes."<sup>1</sup>

The aim of reading is to understand and evaluate what has been read. Too much stress on phonics, context clues, or oral reading without due emphasis at all times on comprehension violates the main aim of teaching reading to children. The teacher should keep in mind that many of the devices suggested for increasing the efficiency of reading are only means to an end. Reading should foster an attitude of interest in and understanding of the material, not merely word-recognition and pronunciation.

The purposes of the work-type silent reading program include developing the ability to read in connection with various school subjects, reading for problem-solving, developing the ability to use maps, charts, graphs, tables, indexes, tables of contents, dictionaries, and card files, and developing the ability to take notes, to outline, to summarize, to skim, and to organize data.

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<sup>1</sup>Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 392.

The following suggestions should be useful in improving the teaching of work-type silent reading:

1. Provide opportunities for practicing the needed skills in meaningful situations rather than in isolated exercises.
2. Provide a wide variety of reading materials.
3. Stress the improvement of reading not only during periods set aside for that purpose but also in connection with the social studies, science, health, and other curriculum areas.
4. Help pupils learn when to master specific details and when to try to retain only the main ideas.
5. Help pupils learn to take notes, to give a report, to tell a story, and to follow directions.
6. Adjust the difficulty of material to individual differences in interests and abilities.
7. Help pupils learn to adjust reading speed to the material being read.<sup>1</sup>

The integrative reading program emphasizes the use of reading as a vehicle for learning. These experiences may extend from the making of a reading chart in the first grade to record a trip to a farm home, to carefully organized research in several reference books by sixth grade children seeking to find out more about the doings of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The purposes of recreational reading are to help the child build an abiding interest in reading as a leisure activity, to stimulate him to read widely, and to help him to enjoy reading material of increasingly better quality.

Children need books to widen their horizons, deepen their understandings, and give them sounder social insights. They also need books that minister to their merriment or deepen their appreciation of beauty. They need heroism, fantasy, and down-to-earth realism.

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<sup>1</sup>William B. Ragan, Modern Elementary Curriculum (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960), p. 206.



And they need books that, in the course of a good story, help to develop clear standards of right and wrong. Finally, children's books should have those qualities of good writing that distinguish literature for any age or group of people.

In general, children like stories with an adequate theme, strong enough to generate and support a lively plot. They appreciate memorable characters and distinctive style. Most stories which have become durable additions to children's literature have had these characteristics.

The recreational program indicates broad use of library resources, skills, and abilities, in order to build and extend the interests of children through books. The interests may be aligned with recreational or academic pursuits; and children should learn that the school and public library are well-springs of information and enjoyment.

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<sup>1</sup>May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1957), p. 16.

## EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

Now that our program has been in effect three years, special staff meetings are held to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and then decide what steps are necessary to revise or improve the program. In evaluating the program the following have been considered:

- (1) A cooperative analysis of objectives of the lesson unit.
- (2) Evaluating the outcomes of reading units, of teacher-pupil planning and execution of units.
- (3) A cooperative study and evaluation of the use made of courses of study, of resource units, and leads for teaching-learning situations.
- (4) An analysis of such aspects of teaching as questioning, assigning, summarizing, and diagnosing pupil difficulties.
- (5) Repeat the tests and compare them with those given in the previous year.
- (6) Check progress toward goal attainments by teachers' observations and tests.

An evaluation of the developmental reading program inaugurated in 1961-62 was made by the elementary principal and the writer who conducted one of the classes. The evaluation took place in the office of the principal at the end of the school year. It was apparent to the writer that the evaluation should have included all the staff before the closing of the school year.

The objectives of reading, the characteristics of a good reader, and the instructional aspects of reading that were previously stated in



this report were checked subjectively against the results of the developmental reading program. The principal and the writer checked to see whether or not each item was covered in the program. This evaluation was based on what the developmental reading program covered and not on how it was taught by the individual teacher. Some items were not covered very well in the reading program, but were covered in the regular classroom during a social studies lesson or while studying some other phase of the Language Arts.

A record of each pupil's progress in reading rate and comprehension is recorded at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year. These records are kept with each individual's permanent record in the school vault.

The teachers in the Hiawatha Elementary School are of the opinion that the reading program has been very much improved since instruction has been given to more nearly equal groups of the students in the intermediate grades, and a special teacher has been hired to teach the children in the school who have reading and speech disabilities.

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**A DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM FOR THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES  
IN THE HIAWATHA, KANSAS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

by

**JACK CARROLL CATT**

**B. S., Kansas State University, 1958**

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**AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT**

**submitted in partial fulfillment of the**

**requirements for the degree**

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas**

**1964**

The purpose of this report was to present the principles of a developmental reading program and suggest the worthiness of these principles in formulating an effective developmental reading program for an elementary school.

Library research brought out the wisdom of establishing the need for developmental reading programs in our schools. These programs should be formulated through the cooperative efforts of the administrators, teachers, and lay members of the community.

The report was devoted to listing the generally accepted principles of a developmental reading program and evolving each into a portion of the total program which was instituted in the Hiawatha Elementary School. These principles in condensed version are: (1) reading goals, (2) social and personal development, (3) communicative experiences, (4) a continuous reading program, (5) a flexible reading program, (6) a stimulating classroom setting, (7) a wide range of reading materials, (8) continuous measurement of the reading program, (9) identification and remediation of difficulties, (10) common interests and needs, (11) reading as a process, (12) reading for understanding, (13) continual reading progress of the individual, and (14) developing reading maturity.

During the 1960-61 school year the teachers of the Hiawatha Elementary School began studying a new developmental reading program. The goal was to improve our reading program. The objectives set by the teachers were extending and enriching the experience of the child; broadening and improving interests and tastes in reading; developing resourcefulness in finding information; promoting self-direction; and achieving

satisfactory progress in such basic reading skills as word recognition, vocabulary development, and comprehension and speed. If these objectives were to be realized attention must be given to reading in every phase of the school program rather than merely at specified periods.

In order to organize a more effective developmental reading program the intermediate grade pupils in the Hiawatha Elementary School were grouped according to their reading abilities. The advantages of grouping are that it provides a more nearly homogeneous group for the teacher to work with by greatly reducing the number of reading groups within a given level. Each child competes with students more nearly on his level of ability. This improves the chance of success for the slower child; while the competition for the gifted child becomes keener. Differentiated instruction is a way of evaluating and living with a group of individuals in a classroom that results in a maximum of development of each individual in terms of his interests, needs, and capacities.

An evaluation of the developmental reading program was made by the elementary principal and the writer who conducted one of the classes. The evaluation took place in the office of the principal at the end of the school year. It was apparent to the writer that the evaluation should have included all the staff before the closing of the school year.

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The evaluation was based on what the developmental reading program covered and not on how it was taught by the individual teacher. Some items were not covered very well in the reading program, but were covered in the regular classroom during a social studies lesson or while studying some other phase of the Language Arts.